

PROMETHEUS BOUND
OF ÆSCHYLUS

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

OF THE life of Æschylus, the first of the three great masters of Greek tragedy, only a very meager outline has come down to us. He was born at Eleusis, near Athens, B.C. 525, the son of Euphorion. Before he was twenty-five he began to compete for the tragic prize, but did not win a victory for twelve years. He spent two periods of years in Sicily, where he died in 456, killed, it is said, by a tortoise which an eagle dropped on his head. Though a professional writer, he did his share of fighting for his country, and is reported to have taken part in the battles of Marathon, Salamis, and Platæa.

Of the seventy or eighty plays which he is said to have written, only seven survive: "The Persians," dealing with the defeat of Xerxes at Salamis; "The Seven against Thebes," part of a tetralogy on the legend of Thebes; "The Suppliants," on the daughters of Danaüs; "Prometheus Bound," part of a trilogy, of which the first part was probably "Prometheus, the Fire-Bringer," and the last, "Prometheus Unbound"; and the "Oresteia," the only example of a complete Greek tragic trilogy which has come down to us, consisting of the "Agamemnon," the "Choëphoræ" ("The Libation-Bearers"), and the "Eumenides" ("The Furies").

The importance of Æschylus in the development of the drama is immense. Before him tragedy had consisted of the chorus and one actor; and by introducing a second actor, expanding the dramatic dialogue thus made possible, and reducing the lyrical parts, he practically created Greek tragedy as we understand it. Like other writers of his time, he acted in his own plays, and trained the chorus in their dances and songs; and he did much to give impressiveness to the performances by his development of the accessories of scene and costume on the stage. Of the four plays here reproduced, "Prometheus Bound" holds an exceptional place in the literature of the world. As conceived by Æschylus, Prometheus is the champion of man against the oppression of Zeus; and the argument of the drama has a certain correspondence to the problem of the Book of Job. The Oresteian trilogy on "The House of Atreus" is one of the supreme productions of all literature. It deals with the two great themes of the retribution of crime and the inheritance of evil; and here again a parallel may be found between the assertions of the justice of God by Æschylus and by the Hebrew prophet Ezekiel. Both contend

against the popular idea that the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge; both maintain that the soul that sinneth, it shall die. The nobility of thought and the majesty of style with which these ideas are set forth give this triple drama its place at the head of the literary masterpieces of the antique world.

PROMETHEUS BOUND

OF ÆSCHYLUS

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

PROMETHEUS
STRENGTH

HERMES
HEPHÆSTOS

OKEANOS
FORCE

Chorus of Ocean Nymphs

SCENE—Skythia, on the heights of Caucasos. The Euxine seen in the distance.

Enter HEPHÆSTOS, STRENGTH, and FORCE, leading
PROMETHEUS in chains¹

Strength

LO! to a plain, earth's boundary remote,
We now are come,—the tract as Skythian known,
A desert inaccessible: and now,
Hephæstos, it is thine to do the hests
The Father gave thee, to these lofty crags
To bind this crafty trickster fast in chains
Of adamantine bonds that none can break;
For he, thy choice flower stealing, the bright glory
Of fire that all arts spring from, hath bestowed it
On mortal men. And so for fault like this
He now must pay the Gods due penalty,
That he may learn to bear the sovereign rule
Of Zeus, and cease from his philanthropy.

Heph. O Strength, and thou, O Force, the hest of Zeus,
As far as touches you, attains its end,
And nothing hinders. Yet my courage fails

¹ The scene seems at first an exception to the early conventional rule, which forbade the introduction of a third actor on the Greek stage. But it has been noticed that (1) Force does not speak, and (2) Prometheus does not speak till Strength and Force have retired, and that it is therefore probable that the whole work of nailing is done on a lay figure or effigy of some kind, and that one of the two who had before taken part in the dialogue then speaks behind it in the character of Prometheus. So the same actor must have appeared in succession as Okeanos, Io, and Hermes.

To bind a God of mine own kin by force
 To this bare rock where tempests wildly sweep;
 And yet I needs must muster courage for it:
 'Tis no slight thing the Father's words to scorn.
 O thou of Themis [*to PROMETHEUS*] wise in counsel son,
 Full deep of purpose, lo! against my will,²
 I fetter thee against thy will with bonds
 Of bronze that none can loose, to this lone height,
 Where thou shalt know nor voice nor face of man,
 But scorching in the hot blaze of the sun,
 Shalt lose thy skin's fair beauty. Thou shalt long
 For starry-mantled night to hide day's sheen,
 For sun to melt the rime of early dawn;
 And evermore the weight of present ill
 Shall wear thee down. Unborn as yet is he
 Who shall release thee: this the fate thou gain'st
 As due reward for thy philanthropy.
 For thou, a God not fearing wrath of Gods,
 In thy transgression gav'st their power to men;
 And therefore on this rock of little ease
 Thou still shalt keep thy watch, nor lying down,
 Nor knowing sleep, nor ever bending knee;
 And many groans and wailings profitless
 Thy lips shall utter; for the mind of Zeus
 Remains inexorable. Who holds a power
 But newly gained³ is ever stern of mood.

Strength. Let be! Why linger in this idle pity?
 Why dost not hate a God to Gods a foe,
 Who gave thy choicest prize to mortal men?

Heph. Strange is the power of kin and intercourse.⁴

² Prometheus (*Forethought*) is the son of Themis (*Right*), the second occupant of the Pythian Oracle (*Eumen.* v. 2). His sympathy with man leads him to impart the gift which raised them out of savage animal life, and for this Zeus, who appears throughout the play as a hard taskmaster, sentences him to fetters. Hephæstos, from whom this fire had been stolen, has a touch of pity for him. Strength, who comes as the servant, not of Hephæstos, but of Zeus himself, acts, as such, with merciless cruelty.

³ The generalised statement refers to Zeus, as having but recently expelled Cronos from his throne in heaven.

⁴ Hephæstos, as the great fire-worker, had taught Prometheus to use the fire which he afterwards bestowed on men.

Strength. I own it; yet to slight the Father's words,
How may that be? Is not that fear the worse?

Heph. Still art thou ruthless, full of savagery.

Strength. There is no help in weeping over him:
Spend not thy toil on things that profit not.

Heph. O handicraft to me intolerable!

Strength. Why loath'st thou it? Of these thy present
griefs

That craft of thine is not one whit the cause.

Heph. And yet I would some other had that skill.

Strength. All things bring toil except for Gods to reign;⁵
For none but Zeus can boast of freedom true.

Heph. Too well I see the proof, and gainsay not.

Strength. Wilt thou not speed to fix the chains on
him,

Lest He, the Father, see thee loitering here?

Heph. Well, here the handcuffs thou mayst see prepared.

Strength. In thine hands take him. Then with all thy
might

Strike with thine hammer; nail him to the rocks.

Heph. The work goes on, I ween, and not in vain.

Strength. Strike harder, rivet, give no whit of ease:
A wondrous knack has he to find resource,
Even where all might seem to baffle him.

Heph. Lo! this his arm is fixed inextricably.

Strength. Now rivet thou this other fast, that he
May learn, though sharp, that he than Zeus is duller.

Heph. No one but he could justly blame my work.

Strength. Now drive the stern jaw of the adamant
wedge

Right through his chest with all the strength thou hast.

Heph. Ah me! Prometheus, for thy woes I groan.

Strength. Again, thou'rt loth, and for the foes of Zeus
Thou groanest: take good heed to it lest thou
Ere long with cause thyself commiserate.

Heph. Thou seest a sight unsightly to our eyes.

⁵ Perhaps, "All might is ours except o'er Gods to rule."

Strength. I see this man obtaining his deserts:
Nay, cast thy breast-chains round about his ribs.

Heph. I must needs do it. Spare thine o'ermuch bidding;
Go thou below and rivet both his legs.⁶

Strength. Nay, I will bid thee, urge thee to thy work.

Heph. There, it is done, and that with no long toil.

Strength. Now with thy full power fix the galling fetters:
Thou hast a stern o'erlooker of thy work.

Heph. Thy tongue but utters words that match thy
form.⁷

Strength. Choose thou the melting mood; but chide not
me
For my self-will and wrath and ruthlessness.

Heph. Now let us go, his limbs are bound in chains.

Strength. Here then wax proud, and stealing what
belongs

To the Gods, to mortals give it. What can they
Avail to rescue thee from these thy woes?

Falsely the Gods have given thee thy name,
Prometheus, Forethought; forethought thou dost need
To free thyself from this rare handiwork.

[*Exeunt* HEPHÆSTOS, STRENGTH, and FORCE,
leaving PROMETHEUS on the rock.

*Prom.*⁸ Thou firmament of God, and swift-winged
winds,

Ye springs of rivers, and of ocean waves
That smile innumerable! Mother of us all,
O Earth, and Sun's all-seeing eye, behold,
I pray, what I, a God, from Gods endure.

Behold in what foul case
I for ten thousand years

⁶ The words indicate that the effigy of Prometheus, now nailed to the rock, was, as being that of ■ Titan, of colossal size.

⁷ The touch is characteristic as showing that here, as in the *Eumenides*, Æschylus relied on the horribleness of the masks, as part of the machinery of his plays.

⁸ The silence of Prometheus up to this point was partly, as has been said, consequent on the conventional laws of the Greek drama, but it is also a touch of supreme insight into the heroic temper. In the presence of his torturers, the Titan will not utter even a groan. When they are gone, he appeals to the sympathy of Nature.

Shall struggle in my woe,
 In these unseemly chains.
 Such doom the new-made Monarch of the Blest
 Hath now devised for me.
 Woe, woe! The present and the oncoming pang
 I wail, as I search out
 The place and hour when end of all these ills
 Shall dawn on me at last.
 What say I? All too clearly I foresee
 The things that come, and nought of pain shall be
 By me unlooked-for; but I needs must bear
 My destiny as best I may, knowing well
 The might resistless of Necessity.
 And neither may I speak of this my fate,
 Nor hold my peace. For I, poor I, through giving
 Great gifts to mortal men, am prisoner made
 In these fast fetters; yea, in fennel stalk⁹
 I snatched the hidden spring of stolen fire,
 Which is to men a teacher of all arts,
 Their chief resource. And now this penalty
 Of that offence I pay, fast riveted
 In chains beneath the open firmament.
 Ha! ha! What now?
 What sound, what odour floats invisibly?¹⁰
 Is it of God or man, or blending both?
 And has one come to this remotest rock
 To look upon my woes? Or what wills he?
 Behold me bound, a God to evil doomed,

⁹ The legend is from Hesiod (*Theogon.* v. 567). The fennel, or *narthex*, seems to have been a large umbelliferous plant, with a large stem filled with a sort of pith, which was used when dry as tinder. Stalks were carried as wands (the *thyrsi*) by the men and women who joined in Bacchanalian processions. In modern botany, the name is given to the plant which produces *Asafœtida*, and the stem of which, from its resinous character, would burn freely, and so connect itself with the Promethean myth. On the other hand, the *Narthex Asafœtida* is found at present only in Persia, Afghanistan, and the Punjab.

¹⁰ The ocean nymphs, like other divine ones, would be anointed with ambrosial unguents, and the odour would be wafted before them by the rustling of their wings. This, too, we may think of as part of the "stage effects" of the play.

The foe of Zeus, and held
In hatred by all Gods
Who tread the courts of Zeus:
And this for my great love,
Too great, for mortal men.
Ah me! what rustling sounds
Hear I of birds not far?
With the light whirr of wings
The air re-echoeth:
All that draws nigh to me is cause of fear.¹¹

*Enter Chorus of Ocean Nymphs, with wings,
floating in the air*¹²

Chor. Nay, fear thou nought: in love
All our array of wings
In eager race hath come
To this high peak, full hardly gaining o'er
Our Father's mind and will;
And the swift-rushing breezes bore me on:
For lo! the echoing sound of blows on iron
Pierced to our cave's recess, and put to flight
My shamefast modesty,
And I in unshod haste, on wingèd car,
To thee rushed hitherward.

Prom. Ah me! ah me!
Offspring of Tethys blest with many a child,
Daughters of Old Okeanos that rolls
Round all the earth with never-sleeping stream,
Behold ye me, and see
With what chains fettered fast,
I on the topmost crags of this ravine
Shall keep my sentry-post unenviable.

¹¹ The words are not those of a vague terror only. The sufferer knows that his tormentor is to come to him before long on wings, and therefore the sound as of the flight of birds is full of terrors.

¹² By the same stage mechanism the Chorus remains in the air till verse 14, page 176, when, at the request of Prometheus, they alight.

Chor. I see it, O Prometheus, and a mist
Of fear and full of tears comes o'er mine eyes,
Thy frame beholding thus,
Writhing on these high rocks
In adamantine ills.

New pilots now o'er high Olympus rule,
And with new-fashioned laws
Zeus reigns, down-trampling Right,
And all the ancient powers He sweeps away.

Prom. Ah! would that 'neath the Earth, 'neath Hades
too,

Home of the dead, far down to Tartaros
Unfathomable He in fetters fast
In wrath had hurled me down:
So neither had a God

Nor any other mocked at these my woes;
But now, the wretched plaything of the winds,
I suffer ills at which my foes rejoice.

Chor. Nay, which of all the Gods
Is so hard-hearted as to joy in this?
Who, Zeus excepted, doth not pity thee
In these thine ills? But He,
Ruthless, with soul unbent,
Subdues the heavenly host, nor will He cease¹³
Until His heart be satiate with power,
Or some one seize with subtle stratagem
The sovran might that so resistless seemed.

Prom. Nay, of a truth, though put to evil shame,
In massive fetters bound,
The Ruler of the Gods
Shall yet have need of me, yes, e'en of me,
To tell the counsel new
That seeks to strip from Him

■ Here, as throughout the play, the poet puts into the mouth of his *dramatis personæ* words which must have seemed to the devouter Athenians sacrilegious enough to call for an indictment before the Areiopagos. But the final play of the Trilogy came, we may believe, as the *Eumenides* did in its turn, as ■ reconciliation of the conflicting thoughts that rise in men's minds out of the seeming anomalies of the world.

His sceptre and His might of sovereignty.
In vain will He with words
Or suasion's honeyed charms
Soothe me, nor will I tell
Through fear of His stern threats,
Ere He shall set me free
From these my bonds, and make,
Of His own choice, amends
For all these outrages.

Chor. Full rash art thou, and yield'st
In not a jot to bitterest form of woe;
Thou art o'erfree and reckless in thy speech:
But piercing fear hath stirred
My inmost soul to strife;
For I fear greatly touching thy distress,
As to what haven of these woes of thine
Thou now must steer: the son of Cronos hath
A stubborn mood and heart inexorable.

Prom. I know that Zeus is hard,
And keeps the Right supremely to Himself;
But then, I trow, He'll be
Full pliant in His will,
When He is thus crushed down.
Then, calming down His mood
Of hard and bitter wrath,
He'll hasten unto me,
As I to Him shall haste,
For friendship and for peace.

Chor. Hide it not from us, tell us all the tale:
For what offence Zeus, having seized thee thus,
So wantonly and bitterly insults thee:
If the tale hurt thee not, inform thou us.

Prom. Painful are these things to me e'en to speak:
Painful is silence; everywhere is woe.
For when the high Gods fell on mood of wrath
And hot debate of mutual strife was stirred,
Some wishing to hurl Cronos from his throne,

That Zeus, forsooth, might reign; while others
strove,

Eager that Zeus might never rule the Gods:
Then I, full strongly seeking to persuade
The Titans, yea, the sons of Heaven and Earth,
Failed of my purpose. Scorning subtle arts,
With counsels violent, they thought that they
By force would gain full easy mastery.
But then not once or twice my mother Themis
And Earth, one form though bearing many names,¹⁴
Had prophesied the future, how 'twould run,
That not by strength nor yet by violence,
But guile, should those who prospered gain the
day.

And when in my words I this counsel gave,
They deigned not e'en to glance at it at all.
And then of all that offered, it seemed best
To join my mother, and of mine own will,
Not against His will, take my side with Zeus,
And by my counsels, mine, the dark deep pit
Of Tartaros the ancient Cronos holds,
Himself and his allies. Thus profiting
By me, the mighty ruler of the Gods
Repays me with these evil penalties:
For somehow this disease in sovereignty
Inheres, of never trusting to one's friends.¹⁵
And since ye ask me under what pretence
He thus maltreats me, I will show it you:
For soon as He upon His father's throne
Had sat secure, forthwith to divers Gods
He divers gifts distributed, and His realm
Began to order. But of mortal men

¹⁴ The words leave it uncertain whether Themis is identified with Earth, or, as in the *Eumenides* (v. 2), distinguished from her. The Titans as a class, then, children of Okeanos and Chthôn (another name for *Land* or *Earth*), are the kindred rather than the brothers of Prometheus.

¹⁵ The generalising words here, as in v. 12, page 175, appeal to the Athenian hatred of all that was represented by the words *tyrant* and *tyranny*.

And Zeus, by His own laws His sway maintaining,
Shows to the elder Gods
A mood of haughtiness.

ANTISTROPHE I

And all the country echoeth with the moan,
And poureth many a tear
For that magnificent power
Of ancient days far-seen that thou didst share
With those of one blood sprung;
And all the mortal men who hold the plain
Of holy Asia as their land of sojourn,
They grieve in sympathy
For thy woes lamentable.

STROPHE II

And they, the maiden band who find their home
On distant Colchian coasts,
Fearless of fight,²⁵
Or Skythian horde in earth's remotest clime,
By far Mæotic lake;²⁶

ANTISTROPHE II

And warlike glory of Arabia's tribes,²⁷
Who nigh to Caucasos
In rock-fort dwell,
An army fearful, with sharp-pointed spear
Raging in war's array.

STROPHE III

One other Titan only have I seen,
One other of the Gods,

²⁵ These are, of course, the Amazons, who were believed to have come through Thrakè from the Tauric Chersonesos, and had left traces of their name and habits in the Attic traditions of Theseus.

²⁶ Beyond the plains of Skythia and the lake Mæotis (the sea of Azov) there would be the great river Okeanos, which was believed to flow round the earth.

²⁷ Sarmatia has been conjectured instead of Arabia. No Greek author sanctions the extension of the latter name to so remote a region as that north of the Caspian.

Thus bound in woes of adamantine strength—
 Atlas, who ever groans
 Beneath the burden of a crushing might,
 The outspread vault of heaven.

ANTISTROPHE III

And lo! the ocean billows murmur loud
 In one accord with him;²⁸
 The sea-depths groan, and Hades' swarthy pit
 Re-echoeth the sound,
 And fountains of clear rivers, as they flow,
 Bewail his bitter griefs.

Prom. Think not it is through pride or stiff self-will
 That I am silent. But my heart is worn,
 Self-contemplating, as I see myself
 Thus outraged. Yet what other hand than mine
 Gave these young Gods in fulness all their gifts?
 But these I speak not of; for I should tell
 To you that know them. But those woes of men,²⁹
 List ye to them,—how they, before as babes,
 By me were roused to reason, taught to think;
 And this I say, not finding fault with men,
 But showing my good-will in all I gave.
 For first, though seeing, all in vain they saw,
 And hearing, heard not rightly. But, like forms
 Of phantom-dreams, throughout their life's whole length
 They muddled all at random; did not know
 Houses of brick that catch the sunlight's warmth,
 Nor yet the work of carpentry. They dwelt
 In hollowed holes, like swarms of tiny ants,

²⁸ The Greek leaves the object of the sympathy undefined, but it seems better to refer it to that which Atlas receives from the waste of waters around, and the dark world beneath, than to the pity shown to Prometheus. This has already been dwelt on in the first stanza, page 181.

²⁹ The passage that follows has for modern palæontologists the interest of coinciding with their views as to the progress of human society, and the condition of mankind during what has been called the "Stone" period. Comp. Lucretius, v. 955-984.

In sunless depths of caverns; and they had
 No certain signs of winter, nor of spring
 Flower-laden, nor of summer with her fruits;
 But without counsel fared their whole life long,
 Until I showed the risings of the stars,
 And settings hard to recognise.³⁰ And I
 Found Number for them, chief device of all,
 Groupings of letters, Memory's handmaid that,
 And mother of the Muses.³¹ And I first
 Bound in the yoke wild steeds, submissive made
 Or to the collar or men's limbs, that so
 They might in man's place bear his greatest toils;
 And horses trained to love the rein I yoked
 To chariots, glory of wealth's pride of state;³²
 Nor was it any one but I that found
 Sea-crossing, canvas-wingèd cars of ships:
 Such rare designs inventing (wretched me!)
 For mortal men, I yet have no device
 By which to free myself from this my woe.³³

Chor. Foul shame thou sufferest: of thy sense
 bereaved,

Thou errest greatly: and, like leech unskilled,
 Thou lovest heart when smitten with disease,
 And know'st not how to find the remedies
 Wherewith to heal thine own soul's sicknesses.

Prom. Hearing what yet remains, thou'lt wonder
 more,

What arts and what resources I devised:
 And this the chief: if any one fell ill,

³⁰ Comp. Mr. Blakesley's note on Herod. ii. 4, as showing that here there was the greater risk of faulty observation.

³¹ Another reading gives perhaps ■ better sense—

"Memory, handmaid true

And mother of the Muses."

³² In Greece, as throughout the East, the ox was used for all agricultural labours, the horse by the noble and the rich, either in war chariots, or stately processions, or in chariot races in the great games.

³³ Compare with this the account of the inventions of Palamedes in Sophocles, *Fragm.* 379.

There was no help for him, nor healing food
 Nor unguent, nor yet potion; but for want
 Of drugs they wasted, till I showed to them
 The blendings of all mild medicaments,³⁴
 Wherewith they ward the attacks of sickness sore.
 I gave them many modes of prophecy;³⁵
 And I first taught them what dreams needs must prove
 True visions, and made known the ominous sounds
 Full hard to know; and tokens by the way,
 And flights of taloned birds I clearly marked,—
 Those on the right propitious to mankind,
 And those sinister,—and what form of life
 They each maintain, and what their enmities
 Each with the other, and their loves and friendships;
 And of the inward parts the plumpness smooth.
 And with what colour they the Gods would please,
 And the streaked comeliness of gall and liver:
 And with burnt limbs enwrapt in fat, and chine,
 I led men on to art full difficult:
 And I gave eyes to omens drawn from fire,
 Till then dim-visioned. So far, then, for this.
 And 'neath the earth the hidden boons for men,
 Bronze, iron, silver, gold, who else could say
 That he, ere I did, found them? None, I know,
 Unless he fain would babble idle words.
 In one short word, then, learn the truth condensed,—
 All arts of mortals from Prometheus spring.

Chor. Nay, be not thou to men so overkind,

³⁴ Here we can recognise the knowledge of one who had studied in the schools of Pythagoras, or had at any rate picked up their terminology. A more immediate connexion may perhaps be traced with the influence of Epimenides, who was said to have spent many years in searching out the healing virtues of plants, and to have written books about them.

³⁵ The lines that follow form almost a manual of the art of divination as then practised. The "ominous sounds" include chance words, strange cries, any unexpected utterance that connected itself with men's fears for the future. The flights of birds were watched by the diviner as he faced the north, and so the region on the right hand was that of the sunrise, light, blessedness; on the left there were darkness and gloom and death.

While thou thyself art in sore evil case;
For I am sanguine that thou too, released
From bonds, shalt be as strong as Zeus Himself.

Prom. It is not thus that Fate's decree is fixed;
But I, long crushed with twice ten thousand woes
And bitter pains, shall then escape my bonds;
Art is far weaker than Necessity.

Chor. Who guides the helm, then, of Necessity?

Prom. Fates triple-formed, Erinyes unforgetting.

Chor. Is Zeus, then, weaker in His might than these?

Prom. Not even He can 'scape the thing decreed.

Chor. What is decreed for Zeus but still to reign?

Prom. Thou mayst no further learn, ask thou no more.

Chor. 'Tis doubtless some dread secret which thou
hidest.

Prom. Of other theme make mention, for the time
Is not yet come to utter this, but still
It must be hidden to the uttermost;
For by thus keeping it it is that I
Escape my bondage foul, and these my pains.

STROPHE I

Chor. Ah! ne'er may Zeus the Lord,
Whose sovran sway rules all,
His strength in conflict set
Against my feeble will!
Nor may I fail to serve
The Gods with holy feast
Of whole burnt-offerings,
Where the stream ever flows
That bears my father's name,
The great Okeanos!
Nor may I sin in speech!
May this grace more and more
Sink deep into my soul
And never fade away!

ANTISTROPHE I

Sweet is it in strong hope
 To spend long years of life,
 With bright and cheering joy
 Our heart's thoughts nourishing.
 I shudder, seeing thee
 Thus vexed and harassed sore
 By twice ten thousand woes;
 For thou in pride of heart,
 Having no fear of Zeus,
 In thine own obstinacy,
 Dost show for mortal men,
 Prometheus, love o'ermuch.

STROPHE II

See how that boon, dear friends,
 For thee is bootless found.
 Say, where is any help?
 What aid from mortals comes?
 Hast thou not seen this brief and powerless life,
 Fleeting as dreams, with which man's purblind race
 Is fast in fetters bound?
 Never shall counsels vain
 Of mortal men break through
 The harmony of Zeus.

ANTISTROPHE II

This lesson have I learnt
 Beholding thy sad fate,
 Prometheus! Other strains
 Come back upon my mind,
 When I sang wedding hymns around thy bath,
 And at thy bridal bed, when thou didst take
 In wedlock's holy bands
 One of the same sire born,
 Our own Hesione,

Persuading her with gifts
As wife to share thy couch.

*Enter Io in form like a fair woman with a heifer's
horns,³⁶ followed by the Spectre of ARGOS*

Io. What land is this? What people? Whom shall I
Say that I see thus vexed
With bit and curb of rock?
For what offence dost thou
Bear fatal punishment?
Tell me to what far land
I've wandered here in woe.
Ah me! ah me!

Again the gadfly stings me miserable.
Spectre of Argos, thou, the earth-born one—
Ah, keep him off, O Earth!
I fear to look upon that herdsman dread,
Him with ten thousand eyes:
Ah lo! he cometh with his crafty look,
Whom Earth refuses even dead to hold;³⁷
But coming from beneath,
He hunts me miserable,
And drives me famished o'er the sea-beach sand.

STROPHE

And still his waxened reed-pipe soundeth clear
A soft and slumberous strain;
O heavens! O ye Gods!

³⁶ So Io was represented, we are told, by Greek sculptors (Herod. ii. 41), as Isis was by those of Egypt. The points of contact between the myth of Io and that of Prometheus, as adopted, or perhaps developed, by Æschylos, are—(1) that from her the destined deliverer of the chained Titan is to come; (2) that both were suffering from the cruelty of Zeus; (3) that the wanderings of Io gave scope for the wild tales of far countries on which the imagination of the Athenians fed greedily. But, as the *Suppliants* may serve to show, the story itself had a strange fascination for him. In the birth of Epaphos, and Io's release from her frenzy, he saw, it may be, a reconciliation of what had seemed hard to reconcile, a solution of the problems of the world, like in kind to that which was shadowed forth in the lost *Prometheus Unbound*.

³⁷ Argos had been slain by Hermes, and his eyes transferred by Hera to the tail of the peacock, and that bird was henceforth sacred to her.

Whither do these long wanderings lead me on?

For what offence, O son of Cronos, what,

Hast thou thus bound me fast

In these great miseries?

Ah me! ah me!

And why with terror of the gadfly's sting

Dost thou thus vex me, frenzied in my soul?

Burn me with fire, or bury me in earth,

Or to wild sea-beasts give me as a prey:

Nay, grudge me not, O King,

An answer to my prayers:

Enough my many-wandered wanderings

Have exercised my soul,

Nor have I power to learn

How to avert the woe.

(*To Prometheus.*) Hear'st thou the voice of maiden
crowned with horns?

Prom. Surely I heard the maid by gadfly driven,
Daughter of Inachos, who warmed the heart
Of Zeus with love, and now through Hera's hate
Is tried, perforce, with wanderings overlong?

ANTISTROPHE

Io. How is it that thou speak'st my father's name?

Tell me, the suffering one,

Who art thou, who, poor wretch,

Who thus so truly nam'st me miserable,

And tell'st the plague from Heaven,

Which with its haunting stings

Wears me to death? Ah woe!

And I with famished and unseemly bounds

Rush madly, driven by Hera's jealous craft.

Ah, who of all that suffer, born to woe,

Have trouble like the pain that I endure?

But thou, make clear to me

What yet for me remains,

What remedy, what healing for my pangs.
Show me, if thou dost know:
Speak out and tell to me,
The maid by wanderings vexed.

Prom. I will say plainly all thou seek'st to know;
Not in dark tangled riddles, but plain speech,
As it is meet that friends to friends should speak;
Thou seest Prometheus who gave fire to men.

Io. O thou to men as benefactor known,
Why, poor Prometheus, sufferest thou this pain?

Prom. I have but now mine own woes ceased to wail.

Io. Wilt thou not then bestow this boon on me?

Prom. Say what thou seek'st, for I will tell thee all.

Io. Tell me, who fettered thee in this ravine?

Prom. The counsel was of Zeus, the hand Hephæstos'.

Io. Of what offence dost thou the forfeit pay?

Prom. Thus much alone am I content to tell.

Io. Tell me, at least, besides, what end shall come
To my drear wanderings; when the time shall be.

Prom. Not to know this is better than to know.

Io. Nay, hide not from me what I have to bear.

Prom. It is not that I grudge the boon to thee.

Io. Why then delayest thou to tell the whole?

Prom. Not from ill will, but loth to vex thy soul.

Io. Nay, care thou not beyond what pleases me.

Prom. If thou desire it I must speak. Hear then.

Chor. Not yet though; grant me share of pleasure too.
Let us first ask the tale of her great woe,
While she unfolds her life's consuming chances;
Her future sufferings let her learn from thee.

Prom. 'Tis thy work, Io, to grant these their wish,
On other grounds and as thy father's kin;³⁸
For to bewail and moan one's evil chance,
Here where one trusts to gain a pitying tear

³⁸ Inachos, the father of Io (identified with the Argive river of the same name), was, like all rivers, a son of Okeanos, and therefore brother to the nymphs who had come to see Prometheus.

From those who hear,—this is not labour lost.

Io. I know not how to disobey your wish;
 So ye shall learn the whole that ye desire
 In speech full clear. And yet I blush to tell
 The storm that came from God, and brought the loss
 Of maiden face, what way it seized on me.
 For nightly visions coming evermore
 Into my virgin bower, sought to woo me
 With glozing words. "O virgin greatly blest,
 Why art thou still a virgin when thou might'st
 Attain to highest wedlock? For with dart
 Of passion for thee Zeus doth glow, and fain
 Would make thee His. And thou, O child, spurn not
 The bed of Zeus, but go to Lerna's field,
 Where feed thy father's flocks and herds,
 That so the eye of Zeus may find repose
 From this His craving." With such visions I
 Was haunted every evening, till I dared
 To tell my father all these dreams of night,
 And he to Pytho and Dodona sent
 Full many to consult the Gods, that he
 Might learn what deeds and words would please

Heaven's lords.

And they came bringing speech of oracles
 Shot with dark sayings, dim and hard to know.
 At last a clear word came to Inachos
 Charging him plainly, and commanding him
 To thrust me from my country and my home,
 To stray at large³⁹ to utmost bounds of earth;
 And, should he gainsay, that the fiery bolt
 Of Zeus should come and sweep away his race.
 And he, by Loxias' oracles induced,
 Thrust me, against his will, against mine too,
 And drove me from my home; but spite of all,

³⁹ The words used have an almost technical meaning as applied to animals that were consecrated to the service of a God, and set free to wander where they liked. The fate of *Io*, as at once devoted to Zeus and animalised in form, was thus shadowed forth in the very language of the Oracle.

The curb of Zeus constrained him this to do.
And then forthwith my face and mind were changed;
And hornèd, as ye see me, stung to the quick
By biting gadfly, I with maddened leap
Rushed to Kerchneia's fair and limpid stream,
And fount of Lerna.⁴⁰ And a giant herdsman,
Argos, full rough of temper, followed me,
With many an eye beholding, on my track:
And him a sudden and unlooked-for doom
Deprived of life. And I, by gadfly stung,
By scourge from Heaven am driven from land to land.
What has been done thou hearest. And if thou
Canst tell what yet remains of woe, declare it;
Nor in thy pity soothe me with false words;
For hollow words, I deem, are worst of ills.

Chor. Away, away, let be:

Ne'er thought I that such tales
Would ever, ever come unto mine ears;
Nor that such terrors, woes and outrages,
Hard to look on, hard to bear,
Would chill my soul with sharp goad, double-edged.
Ah fate! Ah fate!

I shudder, seeing Io's fortune strange.

Prom. Thou art too quick in groaning, full of fear:
Wait thou awhile until thou hear the rest.

Chor. Speak thou and tell. Unto the sick 'tis sweet
Clearly to know what yet remains of pain.

Prom. Your former wish ye gained full easily.
Your first desire was to learn of her
The tale she tells of her own sufferings;
Now therefore hear the woes that yet remain
For this poor maid to bear at Hera's hands.
And thou, O child of Inachos! take heed
To these my words, that thou mayst hear the goal
Of all thy wanderings. First then, turning hence

⁴⁰ Lerna was the lake near the mouth of the Inachos, close to the sea. Kerchneia may perhaps be identified with the Kenchreæ, the haven of Korinth in later geographies.

Towards the sunrise, tread the untilled plains,
 And thou shalt reach the Skythian nomads, those⁴¹
 Who on smooth-rolling waggons dwell aloft
 In wicker houses, with far-darting bows
 Duly equipped. Approach thou not to these,
 But trending round the coasts on which the surf
 Beats with loud murmurs,⁴² traverse thou that clime.
 On the left hand there dwell the Chalybes,⁴³
 Who work in iron. Of these do thou beware,
 For fierce are they and most inhospitable;
 And thou wilt reach the river fierce and strong,
 True to its name.⁴⁴ This seek not thou to cross,
 For it is hard to ford, until thou come
 To Caucasos itself, of all high hills
 The highest, where a river pours its strength
 From the high peaks themselves. And thou must
 cross

Those summits near the stars, must onward go
 Towards the south, where thou shalt find the host
 Of the Amâzons, hating men, whose home
 Shall one day be around Thermôdon's bank,
 By Themiskyra,⁴⁵ where the ravenous jaws
 Of Salmydessos ope upon the sea,
 Treacherous to sailors, stepdame stern to ships.⁴⁶
 And they with right good-will shall be thy guides;

⁴¹ The wicker huts used by Skythian or Thrakian nomads (the Calmucks of modern geographers) are described by Herodotos (iv. 46) and are still in use.

⁴² *Sc.*, the N.E. boundary of the Euxine, where spurs of the Caucasos ridge approach the sea.

⁴³ The Chalybes are placed by geographers to the south of Colchis. The description of the text indicates a locality farther to the north.

⁴⁴ Probably the Araxes, which the Greeks would connect with a word conveying the idea of a torrent dashing on the rocks. The description seems to imply a river flowing into the Euxine from the Caucasos, and the condition is fulfilled by the Hypanis or *Kouban*.

⁴⁵ When the Amazons appear in contact with Greek history, they are found in Thrace. But they had come from the coast of Pontos, and near the mouth of the Thermodon (*Thermeh*). The words of Prometheus point to yet earlier migrations from the East.

⁴⁶ Here, as in Soph. *Antig.* (970), the name Salmydessos represents the rock-bound, havenless coast from the promontory of Thynias to the entrance of the Bosporos, which had given to the Black Sea its earlier name of Axenos, the "inhospitable."

And thou, hard by a broad pool's narrow gates,
 Wilt pass to the Kimmerian isthmus. Leaving
 This boldly, thou must cross Mæotic channel;⁴⁷
 And there shall be great fame 'mong mortal men
 Of this thy journey, and the Bosporos⁴⁸
 Shall take its name from thee. And Europe's plain
 Then quitting, thou shalt gain the Asian coast.
 Doth not the all-ruling monarch of the Gods
 Seem all ways cruel? For, although a God,
 He, seeking to embrace this mortal maid,
 Imposed these wanderings on her. Thou hast found,
 O maiden! bitter suitor for thy hand;
 For great as are the ills thou now hast heard,
 Know that as yet not e'en the prelude's known.

Io. Ah woe! woe! woe!

Prom. Again thou groan'st and criest. What wilt do
 When thou shalt learn the evils yet to come?

Chor. What! are there troubles still to come for her?

Prom. Yea, stormy sea of woe most lamentable.

Io. What gain is it to live? Why cast I not
 Myself at once from this high precipice,
 And, dashed to earth, be free from all my woes?
 Far better were it once for all to die
 Than all one's days to suffer pain and grief.

Prom. My struggles then full hardly thou wouldst bear,
 For whom there is no destiny of death;
 For that might bring a respite from my woes:
 But now there is no limit to my pangs
 Till Zeus be hurled out from His sovereignty.

Io. What! shall Zeus e'er be hurled from His high state?

Prom. Thou wouldst rejoice, I trow, to see that fall.

Io. How should I not, when Zeus so foully wrongs me?

Prom. That this is so thou now mayst hear from me.

⁴⁷ The track is here in some confusion. From the Amazons south of the Caucasus, *Io* is to find her way to the Tauric Chersonese (the Crimea) and the Kimmerian Bosporos, which flows into the sea of Azov, and so to return to Asia.

⁴⁸ Here, as in a hundred other instances, a false etymology has become the parent of a myth. The name Bosporos is probably Asiatic, not Greek, and has an entirely different signification.

Io. Who then shall rob Him of His sceptred sway?

Prom. Himself shall do it by His own rash plans.

Io. But how? Tell this, unless it bringeth harm.

Prom. He shall wed one for whom one day He'll grieve.

Io. Heaven-born or mortal? Tell, if tell thou mayst.

Prom. Why ask'st thou who? I may not tell thee that.

Io. Shall His bride hurl Him from His throne of might?

Prom. Yea; she shall bear child mightier than his sire.

Io. Has He no way to turn aside that doom?

Prom. No, none; unless I from my bonds be loosed.⁴⁹

Io. Who then shall loose thee 'gainst the will of Zeus?

Prom. It must be one of thy posterity.

Io. What, shall a child of mine free thee from ills?

Prom. Yea, the third generation after ten.⁵⁰

Io. No more thine oracles are clear to me.

Prom. Nay, seek not thou thine own drear fate to know.

Io. Do not, a boon presenting, then withdraw it.

Prom. Of two alternatives, I'll give thee choice.

Io. Tell me of what, then give me leave to choose.

Prom. I give it then. Choose, or that I should tell
Thy woes to come, or who shall set me free.

Chor. Of these be willing one request to grant
To her, and one to me; nor scorn my words:
Tell her what yet of wanderings she must bear,
And me who shall release thee. This I crave.

Prom. Since ye are eager, I will not refuse
To utter fully all that ye desire.
Thee, *Io*, first I'll tell thy wanderings wild,
Thou, write it in the tablets of thy mind.
When thou shalt cross the straits, of continents

⁴⁹ The lines refer to the story that Zeus loved Thetis, the daughter of Nereus, and followed her to Caucasos, but abstained from marriage with her because Prometheus warned him that the child born of that union should overthrow his father. Here the future is used of what was still contingent only. In the lost play of the Trilogy the myth was possibly brought to its conclusion and connected with the release of Prometheus.

⁵⁰ Heracles, whose genealogy was traced through Alcmena, Perseus, Danae, Danaos, and seven other names, to Epaphos and *Io*.

The boundary,⁵¹ take thou the onward path
 On to the fiery-hued and sun-tracked East.
 [And first of all, to frozen Northern blasts
 Thou'lt come, and there beware the rushing whirl,
 Lest it should come upon thee suddenly,
 And sweep thee onward with the cloud-rack wild;]⁵²
 Crossing the sea-surf till thou come at last
 Unto Kisthene's Gorgoneian plains,
 Where dwell the grey-haired virgin Phorkides,⁵³
 Three, swan-shaped, with one eye between them all
 And but one tooth; whom nor the sun beholds
 With radiant beams, nor yet the moon by night:
 And near them are their wingèd sisters three,
 The Gorgons, serpent-tressed, and hating men,
 Whom mortal wight may not behold and live.
 Such is one ill I bid thee guard against;
 Now hear another monstrous sight: Beware
 The sharp-beaked hounds of Zeus that never bark,⁵⁴
 The Gryphons, and the one-eyed mounted host
 Of Arimaspians, who around the stream
 That flows o'er gold, the ford of Pluto, dwell:⁵⁵
 Draw not thou nigh to them. But distant land
 Thou shalt approach, the swarthy tribes who dwell

⁵¹ Probably the Kimmerian Bosphoros. The Tanais or Phasis has, however, been conjectured.

⁵² The history of the passage in brackets is curious enough to call for a note. It is not in any extant MS., but it is found in a passage quoted by Galen as from the *Prometheus Bound*, and is inserted here by Mr. Paley.

⁵³ Kisthene belongs to the geography of legend, lying somewhere on the shore of the great ocean-river in Lybia or Æthiopia, at the end of the world, a great mountain in the far West, beyond the Hesperides, the dwelling-place, as here, of the Gorgons, the daughters of Phorkys. Those first named are the Graiæ.

⁵⁴ Here, like the "wingèd hound" of verse 1043, page 203, for the eagles that are the messengers of Zeus.

⁵⁵ We are carried back again from the fabled West to the fabled East. The Arimaspians, with one eye, and the Grypes or Gryphons (the griffins of mediæval heraldry), quadrupeds with the wings and beaks of eagles, were placed by most writers (Herod. iv. 13, 27) in the north of Europe, in or beyond the *terra incognita* of Skythia. The mention of the "ford of Pluto" and Æthiopia, however, may possibly imply (if we identify it, as Mr. Paley does, with the Tartessos of Spain, or Bætis—*Guadalquivir*) that Æschylos followed another legend which placed them in the West. There is possibly a *paronomasia* between Pluto, the God of Hades, and Plutos, the ideal God of riches.

By the sun's fountain,⁵⁶ Æthiopia's stream:
 By its banks wend thy way until thou come
 To that great fall where from the Bybline hills
 The Neilos pours its pure and holy flood;
 And it shall guide thee to Neilotic land,
 Three-angled, where, O Io, 'tis decreed
 For thee and for thy progeny to found
 A far-off colony. And if of this
 Aught seem to thee as stammering speech obscure,
 Ask yet again and learn it thoroughly:
 Far more of leisure have I than I like.

Chor. If thou hast aught to add, aught left untold
 Of her sore-wasting wanderings, speak it out;
 But if thou hast said all, then grant to us
 The boon we asked. Thou dost not, sure, forget it.

Prom. The whole course of her journeying she hath heard,
 And that she know she hath not heard in vain
 I will tell out what troubles she hath borne
 Before she came here, giving her sure proof
 Of these my words. The greater bulk of things
 I will pass o'er, and to the very goal
 Of all thy wanderings go. For when thou cam'st
 To the Molossian plains, and by the grove⁵⁷
 Of lofty-ridged Dodona, and the shrine
 Oracular of Zeus Thesprotian,
 And the strange portent of the talking oaks,
 By which full clearly, not in riddle dark,
 Thou wast addressed as noble spouse of Zeus,—
 If aught of pleasure such things give to thee,—
 Thence strung to frenzy, thou didst rush along
 The sea-coast's path to Rhea's mighty gulf,⁵⁸
 In backward way from whence thou now art vexed,

⁵⁶ The name was applied by later writers (Quintus Curtius, iv. 7, 22; Lucretius, vi. 848) to the fountain in the temple of Jupiter Ammon in the great Oasis. The "river Æthiops" may be purely imaginary, but it may also suggest the possibility of some vague knowledge of the Niger, or more probably of the Nile itself in the upper regions of its course. The "Bybline hills" carry the name Byblos, which we only read of as belonging to a town in the Delta, to the Second Cataract.

⁵⁷ Comp. Sophocles, *Trachin.* v. 1168. ⁵⁸ The Adriatic or Ionian Gulf.

And for all time to come that reach of sea,
 Know well, from thee Ionian shall be called,
 To all men record of thy journeyings.
 These then are tokens to thee that my mind
 Sees somewhat more than that is manifest.
 What follows (*to the Chorus*) I will speak to you and
 her

In common, on the track of former words
 Returning once again. A city stands,
 Canôbos, at its country's furthest bound,
 Hard by the mouth and silt-bank of the Nile;
 There Zeus shall give thee back thy mind again,⁵⁹
 With hand that works no terror touching thee,—
 Touch only—and thou then shalt bear a child
 Of Zeus begotten, Epaphos, "Touch-born,"
 Swarthy of hue, whose lot shall be to reap
 The whole plain watered by the broad-streamed Neilos:
 And in the generation fifth from him
 A household numbering fifty shall return
 Against their will to Argos, in their flight
 From wedlock with their cousins.⁶⁰ And they too
 (Kites but a little space behind the doves),
 With eager hopes pursuing marriage rites,
 Beyond pursuit shall come; and God shall grudge
 To give up their sweet bodies. And the land
 Pelasgian⁶¹ shall receive them, when by stroke
 Of woman's murderous hand these men shall lie
 Smitten to death by daring deed of night:
 For every bride shall take her husband's life,
 And dip in blood the sharp two-edged sword

⁵⁹ In the *Suppliants*, Zeus is said to have soothed her, and restored her to her human consciousness by his "divine breathings." The thought underlying the legend may be taken either as a distortion of some primitive tradition, or as one of the "unconscious prophecies" of heathenism. The deliverer is not to be born after the common manner of men, and is to have a divine as well as a human parentage.

⁶⁰ See the argument of the *Suppliants*, who, as the daughters of Danaos, descended from Epaphos, are here referred to. The passage is noticeable as showing that the theme of that tragedy was already present to the poet's thoughts.

⁶¹ Argos. So, in the *Suppliants*, Pelasgos is the mythical king of the Apian land who receives them.

(So to my foes may Kypris show herself!).⁶²
 Yet one of that fair band shall love persuade
 Her husband not to slaughter, and her will
 Shall lose its edge; and she shall make her choice
 Rather as weak than murderous to be known.
 And she at Argos shall a royal seed
 Bring forth (long speech 'twould take to tell this clear)
 Famed for his arrows, who shall set me free⁶³
 From these my woes. Such was the oracle
 Mine ancient mother Themis, Titan-born,
 Gave to me; but the manner and the means,—
 That needs a lengthy tale to tell the whole,
 And thou canst nothing gain by learning it.
*Io. Eleleu! Oh, Eleleu!*⁶⁴

The throbbing pain inflames me, and the mood
 Of frenzy-smitten rage;
 The gadfly's pointed sting,
 Not forged with fire, attacks,
 And my heart beats against my breast with fear.
 Mine eyes whirl round and round:
 Out of my course I'm borne
 By the wild spirit of fierce agony,
 And cannot curb my lips,
 And turbid speech at random dashes on
 Upon the waves of dread calamity.

STROPHE I

Chor. Wise, very wise was he
 Who first in thought conceived this maxim sage,
 And spread it with his speech,⁶⁵—
 That the best wedlock is with equals found,

⁶² Hypermnæstra, who spared Lynceus, and by him became the mother of Abas and a line of Argive kings.

⁶³ Heracles, who came to Caucasos, and with his arrows slew the eagle that devoured Prometheus.

⁶⁴ The word is simply an interjection of pain, but one so characteristic that I have thought it better to reproduce it than to give any English equivalent.

⁶⁵ The maxim, "Marry with a woman thine equal," was ascribed to Pittacos.

And that a craftsman, born to work with hands,
 Should not desire to wed
 Or with the soft luxurious heirs of wealth,
 Or with the race that boast their lineage high.

ANTISTROPHE I

Oh ne'er, oh ne'er, dread Fates,
 May ye behold me as the bride of Zeus,
 The partner of His couch,
 Nor may I wed with any heaven-born spouse!
 For I shrink back, beholding Io's lot
 Of loveless maidenhood,
 Consumed and smitten low exceedingly
 By the wild wanderings from great Hera sent!

STROPHE II

To me, when wedlock is on equal terms,
 It gives no cause to fear:
 Ne'er may the love of any of the Gods,
 The strong Gods, look on me
 With glance I cannot 'scape!

ANTISTROPHE II

That fate is war that none can war against,
 Source of resourceless ill;
 Nor know I what might then become of me:
 I see not how to 'scape
 The counsel deep of Zeus.

Prom. Yea, of a truth shall Zeus, though stiff of will,
 Be brought full low. Such bed of wedlock now
 Is He preparing, one to cast Him forth
 In darkness from His sovereignty and throne.
 And then the curse His father Cronos spake
 Shall have its dread completion, even that
 He uttered when he left his ancient throne;

And from these troubles no one of the Gods
 But me can clearly show the way to 'scape.
 I know the time and manner: therefore now
 Let Him sit fearless, in His peals on high
 Putting His trust, and shaking in His hands
 His darts fire-breathing. Nought shall they avail
 To hinder Him from falling shamefully
 A fall intolerable. Such a combatant
 He arms against Himself, a marvel dread,
 Who shall a fire discover mightier far
 Than the red levin, and a sound more dread
 Than roaring of the thunder, and shall shiver
 That plague sea-born that causeth earth to quake,
 The trident, weapon of Poseidon's strength:
 And stumbling on this evil, He shall learn
 How far apart a king's lot from a slave's.

Chor. What thou dost wish thou mutterest against Zeus.

Prom. Things that shall be, and things I wish, I speak.

Chor. And must we look for one to master Zeus?

Prom. Yea, troubles harder far than these are His.

Chor. Art not afraid to vent such words as these?

Prom. What can I fear whose fate is not to die?

Chor. But He may send on thee worse pain than this.

Prom. So let Him do: nought finds me unprepared.

Chor. Wisdom is theirs whoAdrasteia worship.⁶⁶

Prom. Worship then, praise and flatter Him that rules;
 My care for Zeus is nought, and less than nought:
 Let Him act, let Him rule this little while,
 E'en as He will; for long He shall not rule
 Over the Gods. But lo! I see at hand
 The courier of the Gods, the minister
 Of our new sovereign. Doubtless he has come
 To bring me tidings of some new device.

⁶⁶ The Euhemerism of later scholiasts derived the name from a king Adrastos, who was said to have been the first to build a temple to Nemesis, and so the power thus worshipped was called after his name. A better etymology leads us to see in it the idea of the "inevitable" law of retribution working unseen by men, and independently even of the arbitrary will of the Gods, and bringing destruction upon the proud and haughty.

Enter HERMES

Herm. Thee do I speak to,—thee, the teacher wise,
The bitterly o'erbitter, who 'gainst Gods
Hast sinned in giving gifts to short-lived men—
I speak to thee, the filcher of bright fire.
The Father bids thee say what marriage thou
Dost vaunt, and who shall hurl Him from His might;
And this too not in dark mysterious speech,
But tell each point out clearly. Give me not,
Prometheus, task of double journey. Zeus,
Thou seest, is not with such words appeased.

Prom. Stately of utterance, full of haughtiness
Thy speech, as fits a messenger of Gods.
Ye yet are young in your new rule, and think
To dwell in painless towers. Have I not
Seen two great rulers driven forth from thence?⁶⁷
And now the third, who reigneth, I shall see
In basest, quickest fall. Seem I to thee
To shrink and quail before these new-made Gods?
Far, very far from that am I. But thou,
Track once again the path by which thou camest;
Thou shalt learn nought of what thou askest me.

Herm. It was by such self-will as this before
That thou didst bring these sufferings on thyself.

Prom. I for my part, be sure, would never change
My evil state for that thy bondslave's lot.

Herm. To be the bondslave of this rock, I trow,
Is better than to be Zeus' trusty herald!

Prom. So it is meet the insulter to insult.

Herm. Thou waxest proud, 'twould seem, of this thy
doom.

Prom. Wax proud! God grant that I may see my foes
Thus waxing proud, and thee among the rest!

Herm. Dost blame me then for thy calamities?

Prom. In one short sentence—all the Gods I hate,

⁶⁷ Comp. *Agam.* 162-6.

Who my good turns with evil turns repay.

Herm. Thy words prove thee with no slight madness plagued.

Prom. If to hate foes be madness, mad I am.

Herm. Not one could bear thee wert thou prosperous.

Prom. Ah me!

Herm. That word is all unknown to Zeus.

Prom. Time waxing old can many a lesson teach.

Herm. Yet thou at least hast not true wisdom learnt.

Prom. I had not else addressed a slave like thee.

Herm. Thou wilt say nought the Father asks, 'twould seem.

Prom. Fine debt I owe Him, favour to repay.

Herm. Me as a boy thou scornest then, forsooth.

Prom. And art thou not a boy, and sillier far,

If that thou thinkest to learn aught from me?

There is no torture nor device by which

Zeus can impel me to disclose these things

Before these bonds that outrage me be loosed.

Let then the blazing levin-flash be hurled;

With white-winged snow-storm and with earth-born thunders

Let Him disturb and trouble all that is;

Nought of these things shall force me to declare

Whose hand shall drive Him from His sovereignty.

Herm. See if thou findest any help in this.

Prom. Long since all this I've seen, and formed my plans.

Herm. O fool, take heart, take heart at last in time,

To form right thoughts for these thy present woes.

Prom. Like one who soothes a wave, thy speech in vain

Vexes my soul. But deem not thou that I,

Fearing the will of Zeus, shall e'er become

As womanised in mind, or shall entreat

Him whom I greatly loathe, with upturned hand,

In woman's fashion, from these bonds of mine

To set me free. Far, far am I from that.

Herm. It seems that I, saying much, shall speak in vain;

For thou in nought by prayers art pacified,

Or softened in thy heart, but like a colt

Fresh harnessed, thou dost champ thy bit, and strive,

And fight against the reins. Yet thou art stiff
 In weak device; for self-will, by itself,
 In one who is not wise, is less than nought.
 Look to it, if thou disobey my words,
 How great a storm and triple wave of ills,⁶⁸
 Not to be 'scaped, shall come on thee; for first,
 With thunder and the levin's blazing flash
 The Father this ravine of rocks shall crush,
 And shall thy carcase hide, and stern embrace
 Of stony arms shall keep thee in thy place.
 And having traversed space of time full long,
 Thou shalt come back to light, and then his hound,
 The wingèd hound of Zeus, the ravening eagle,
 Shall greedily make banquet of thy flesh,
 Coming all day an uninvited guest,
 And glut himself upon thy liver dark.
 And of that anguish look not for the end,
 Before some God shall come to bear thy woes,
 And will to pass to Hades' sunless realm,
 And the dark cloudy depths of Tartaros.⁶⁹
 Wherefore take heed. No feignèd boast is this,
 But spoken all too truly; for the lips
 Of Zeus know not to speak in lying speech,
 But will perform each single word. And thou,
 Search well, be wise, nor think that self-willed pride
 Shall ever better prove than counsel good.

Chor. To us doth Hermes seem to utter words
 Not out of season; for he bids thee quit
 Thy self-willed pride and seek for counsel good.
 Harken thou to him. To the wise of soul
 It is foul shame to sin persistently.

⁶⁸ Either a mere epithet of intensity, as in our "thrice blest," or rising from the supposed fact that every third wave was larger and more impetuous than the others, like the *fluctus decumanus* of the Latins, or from the sequence of three great waves which some have noted as a common phenomenon in storms.

⁶⁹ Here again we have a strange shadowing forth of the mystery of Atonement, and what we have learnt to call "vicarious" satisfaction. In the later legend, Cheiron, suffering from the agony of his wounds, resigns his immortality, and submits to die in place of the ever-living death to which Prometheus was doomed.

Prom. To me who knew it all
He hath this message borne;
And that a foe from foes
Should suffer is not strange.
Therefore on me be hurled
The sharp-edged wreath of fire;
And let heaven's vault be stirred
With thunder and the blasts
Of fiercest winds; and earth
From its foundations strong,
E'en to its deepest roots,
Let storm-wind make to rock;
And let the ocean wave,
With wild and foaming surge,
Be heaped up to the paths
Where move the stars of heaven;
And to dark Tartaros
Let Him my carcase hurl,
With mighty blasts of force:
Yet me He shall not slay.

Herm. Such words and thoughts from one
Brain-stricken one may hear.
What space divides his state
From frenzy? What repose
Hath he from maddened rage?
But ye who pitying stand
And share his bitter griefs,
Quickly from hence depart,
Lest the relentless roar
Of thunder stun your soul.

Chor. With other words attempt
To counsel and persuade,
And I will hear: for now
Thou hast this word thrust in
That we may never bear.
How dost thou bid me train
My soul to baseness vile?

With him I will endure
Whatever is decreed.
Traitors I've learned to hate,
Nor is there any plague
That more than this I loathe.

Herm. Nay then, remember ye
What now I say, nor blame
Your fortune: never say
That Zeus hath cast you down
To evil not foreseen.
Not so; ye cast yourselves:
For now with open eyes,
Not taken unawares,
In Atè's endless net
Ye shall entangled be
By folly of your own.

*[A pause, and then flashes of lightning and
peals of thunder⁷⁰*

Prom. Yea, now in very deed,
No more in word alone,
The earth shakes to and fro,
And the loud thunder's voice
Bellows hard by, and blaze
The flashing levín-fires;
And tempests whirl the dust,
And gusts of all wild winds
On one another leap,
In wild conflicting blasts,
And sky with sea is blent:
Such is the storm from Zeus
That comes as working fear,

⁷⁰ It is noticeable that both Æschylos and Sophocles have left us tragedies which end in a thunderstorm as an element of effect. But the contrast between the *Prometheus* and the *Ædipus at Colonus* as to the impression left in the one case of serene reconciliation, and in the other of violent antagonism, is hardly less striking than the resemblance in the outward phenomena which are common to the two.

